



Representative

Patricia **LANTZ**



26th District



1997 Legislative Review

To my friends and neighbors,

In the weeks since the 1997 session of the state Legislature concluded, I've had time to reflect on what we did—and did not do—during that 105-day session. I'd like to share my thoughts with you.

I believe we accomplished much in the session that will make a very positive difference in the 26th district, and in the state as a whole. Among those successes I include the comprehensive reform of our juvenile justice system; a revamped welfare package that has the potential to improve a system desperately in need of improvement; and a number of amendments to the Growth Management Act that will make the GMA both more effective and less restrictive.

However, I'm disappointed that Washington's transportation crisis was ignored. I'm disappointed that working families will not receive a fair share of the tax breaks that were enacted. And as a strong believer in the value of public education, I'm particularly concerned by the Legislature's refusal to award our teachers a reasonable salary increase.

That said, I'm proud of the record I made in my first session and I'm encouraged by the positive energy of the legislative process. I'm determined to continue working during the interim and during next year's session to make real progress in the areas where we were less than successful.

Serving you is an honor and a responsibility I take very seriously. I hope to see and talk with as many of you as possible in the weeks ahead. Take a look at this brief legislative review. I hope to hear from you with your questions, comments or suggestions. Please call me . . . or plan to attend one of the two town meetings described inside. Have a great summer.

Best wishes,

Patricia Lantz

GMA Updated, Strengthened

I strongly believe that sensible growth management is necessary to maintain the quality of life that makes Washingtonians some of the most envied people anywhere. That's one reason I co-sponsored legislation to improve the Growth Management Act and benefit both our environment and our economy.

This legislation—based on the well-thought-out recommendations of the bipartisan Land Use Study Commission—was nearly killed by powerful lobbies with a vested interest in eliminating all forms of growth management. But in one of its last official acts before adjourning on April 27, the Legislature accepted the commission's recommendations. The bill was flawed by the addition of sections not proposed by the Commission, but the governor's use of his veto power brought the legislation back to a law I enthusiastically support. With Washington poised to experience a record population explosion during the next few decades, a balanced approach to land use is needed now more than ever. Those of us who live in the 26th district know this especially well.

Rethinking Juvenile Justice

One of the big wins of the 1997 session was the passage of a wide-ranging reform of the state's juvenile justice system. It would be impossible to adequately summarize the massive bill in these few pages, but highlights include:

- Automatically sending certain violent 16- and 17-year-olds to adult court;
- Lengthening the sentences for crimes committed with guns;
- Lengthening some sentences to allow for adequate rehabilitation efforts;
- Simplifying the juvenile sentencing guidelines;
- Involving parents of offenders in the court process; and
- Providing drug treatment for offenders.

Capital Budget a Winner

Washington's capital budget—the “bricks and mortar” budget—is vital to our schools and public buildings, parks, universities, prisons and other long-term investments. As a member of the Capital Budget Committee, I'm pleased to report that the 26th district did well in the budget process. Bremerton's Olympic Community College, for instance, will be receiving more than \$9 million to replace the library that was seriously damaged in the December ice storm and repair the school's central heating system. Our hometown state university, UW Tacoma, also fared well under the capital budget. By allotting nearly \$20 million to the university, the budget makes it possible for UWT to move forward with an aggressive design and construction process, increase current enrollment, and stay on track with projections that call for a student body equivalent to 9,300 full-time students by 2011. Other capital budget items that will directly affect the 26th district include:

- A matching grant of up to \$46,474 to the Kitsap County Museum toward construction of a new building;
- A \$110,000 matching grant to the Kitsap Community Action Program for the acquisition of a jobs-training and volunteer program facility; and
- \$1 million for Dickman Mill Park, to help convert an old industrial site on Commencement Bay into a public park with shoreline access.

Welfare Reform

Like most of my fellow Democrats, I voted **for** the welfare reform bill that first passed out of the House, and **against** the final bill that was eventually sent to Governor Locke. Because he vetoed precisely the portions of the bill that I found unacceptable, I endorse the welfare reform bill that now becomes law. With strict work requirements, a five-year lifetime limit on benefits, hiring incentives for employers, labor standards to protect workers,

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license-revocation for non-payment of child support, and some child-care assistance, it's a good start and a giant step in the right direction.

Short Takes and Missed Opportunities

Transportation

Washington's transportation problems grow more serious by the day. Unfortunately, this year's Legislature lacked the political courage to meet the situation head-on. Nothing was accomplished, and in fact, the new transportation budget is even smaller than the last. I expect transportation to be the defining issue of the next legislative session.

Salaries

We demand a lot from our teachers . . . and they deliver. The majority party, however, couldn't be convinced that Washington's teachers, and the other public employees we take for granted, deserve to see their salaries at least keep up with inflation.

Property taxes

When it comes to taxes, two questions a legislator must answer are these: Is what we're doing right? And is it fair? It was right for business owners to receive a tax break this year, and they got a big one. But our working families and homeowners were equally deserving of tax relief, and they'll see only a minor dip in their state property tax. This one fails the "fair" test, and the Legislature needs to deal with this.

Long-term care

One good piece of legislation to come out of the 1997 session establishes important safeguards for elderly people in long-term care. The "Clara law," named in honor of the sponsor's mother, creates the office of long-term care ombudsman and empowers the position to serve as an advocate for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

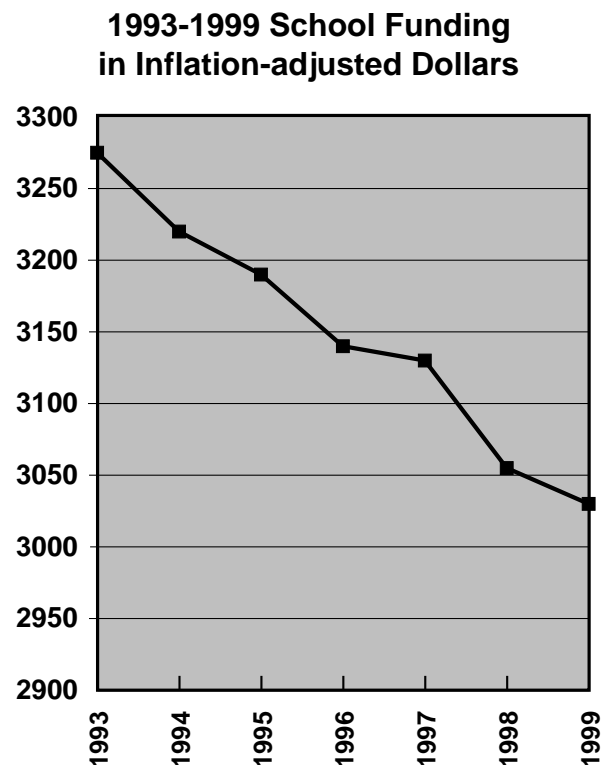
Parental voyeurism

Unfortunately, one bill that did not emerge from the 1997 session was HB 1587. I was prime sponsor of this bill, which would make it a crime for a parent or guardian to photograph their minor child surreptitiously for sexually exploitative purposes. This bill passed the House unanimously but fell victim to political in-fighting in the Senate. I wish we did not need this type of law, but we do, and I intend to reintroduce the bill during the next session.

Education

Washington's working families value a first-rate education, but school funding lost ground to inflation again this year, as it has every year since 1993, when the state was in the grips of a budget emergency. The fact that the emergency has passed was used to justify massive tax cuts for the state's largest corporations, but the same thinking apparently doesn't apply to education. There is no possible excuse for skimping on our children's future prospects to save a few dollars today.

School funding losses since 1993



District 26 TOWN MEETINGS

I hope you'll join me for a cup of coffee and informal discussion at one of two meetings Saturday, June 14. We'll talk about the session that just ended, and the work that lies ahead. I need your help to best represent our interests and issues in the next session.

9-10:30 a.m.
Givens Community Center
Olympic Room
1026 Sidney
Port Orchard

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Peninsula Branch
Pierce County Library
4424 Port Fosdick Dr. NW
Gig Harbor



UW-Tacoma Dean Dr. Vicky Cawein (fourth from right) and several UWT students join Rep. Lantz to discuss increased funding for the university.

Olympia Office:
340 John L. O'Brien Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7964

District Office:
(253) 265-6440

E-mail:
lantz_pa@leg.wa.gov

Toll-free Legislative Hotline:
1-800-562-6000

TDD (for the hearing impaired):
1-800-635-9993

Representative
Patricia
LANTZ

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Printed on recycled paper

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Washington State
Department of Printing